

At San Francisco, Cal., Mr. Joseph W. Allyn,
Boston, 25.

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

WHAT IS LOVE?

BY GABRIELLA.

O, what is love? fair maid, you ask,
And with a reply:
If you're sincere in your request,
To answer it, I try.

But first I'll tell you whence it came,
And whether it is bound,
And where 'tis always found.

It is a plant of heavenly birth,
A native of the sky;
And though it dwells on earth,
It needs no soil to grow.

With early morn, late, evening,
In joy, in sorrow, pain,
In love, in hate, in grief,
It never will be vain.

It always takes up its abode
In pure and humble hearts;
And when it once admittance gains,
It nevermore departs.

It is an emanation from
The heart of man above;
A never-fading stream, which flows
From God, the source of love.

But what its nature, none can know
But those who feel its power;
It whispers peace, and joy, and love,
In sorrow's darkest hour.

It always glows for others' joy—
In pure and humble hearts;
Nor to augment all others' woes,
In own with others' care.

It weeps o'er life's saddest hour,
And dries the tearful eye;
It guides the weary wanderer
To realms of bliss on high.

It is, in Nature's glorious works,
A tender Father's care;
And joins with cheerful voice,
In songs of praise and prayer.

And when the Sabbath morning dawns,
Best day of all the year,
It often soars on wings of faith,
To brighter scenes in heaven.

[Written for The Flag of our Union.]

THE BRIDE OF MOSCOW.

A TALE OF 1812.

BY FRANCIS A. DUPONCEAU.

A year or two before Napoleon's frantic and ill-starred invasion of the Muscovite empire, a Marie LaTour, a young and pretty French milliner from the Rue Vivienne, Paris, had been induced by the representations of a Russian countess, to remove her household goods to Moscow. There she opened her little shop, over which she presided with the air of a mistress, her artistic skill, and for a while favor and patronage were lavished upon her, and she seemed sure of acquiring in a short time a little fortune wherewith to return to the banks of her beloved Seine, and bestow her hand on a handsome young merchant's clerk to whom her heart was already given, and from whom poverty alone kept her aloof.

But with the decay of the short-lived friendship of Alexander and Napoleon, sank the star of our little French milliner, the fate of empire and the fate of milliners are so interwoven. What Russian lady would patronize a French artist, when the French emperor was threatening her country? Orders ceased—carriages rolled by her little shop-door, and she was left alone with an old Russian woman named Fedora, whom she employed to perform the menial duties of her household. To crown her misfortune, her fair patronesses, the countess, removed to St. Petersburg, without giving her a parting call, or affording her any aid to extricate herself from the unpleasant position in which she was involved. Such was the gloomy situation of little Marie LaTour in the memorable summer of 1812.

One night Fedora informed Marie that Ivan Borisloff, a young jeweller of Moscow, whom she had frequently met was coming to see her, and added that he had something particular to communicate. There was so much meaning in the old woman's manner, that Marie's curiosity was keenly excited, and she awaited impatiently for the approaching interview.

In due time Ivan made his appearance, and signals being exchanged between himself and the old servant, the latter immediately left the room. Ivan was a handsome young fellow, perfectly aware of his personal advantages, and never ashamed in the presence of the fair. He was, however, a man of few words, and without waiting time in compliments, came directly to the object of his visit—an offer of his heart and hand.

Marie smiled mournfully and shook her head, as she replied:

"You offer me your hand, Ivan, but you forget that it is not yours to offer."

"How!" exclaimed the Russian. "I may be dull—but I do not think I take your meaning. My hand—not my own to offer! I assure you, mademoiselle, though I have had hints enough from the pretty girls in my quarter, I have never counted myself. My heart and hand were free, till your black eyes laid an embargo on both."

"You forget your situation, Ivan," said Marie, mildly.

"Not so! Am I not coining roubles? Is there an artist in the sacred city who can turn out such work as I can? Where do the nobles and boyards of Moscow go for trinkets, if not to the shop of Ivan Borisloff?"

"You will not understand me," said the Frenchwoman. "Is it possible that you can for a moment forget that you are a serf?"

The color mounted to the cheek of the young jeweller, as he replied hastily:

"You know that I am free to all intents and purposes. One half of my earnings goes, it is

true, to my master, to pay him for the liberty I enjoy; but the other half is mine, and I am rapidly becoming wealthy. What more need I desire?"

"Complete freedom if you are a man," said Marie, warmly. "Can you forget that you are free only by permission—that there lives a man who has a legal right to control your every movement—that in a moment of caprice he may recall the privilege, and condemn you to the most menial occupation?"

"Count Smoloff will never do so," said Marie. "He has the right to do so. Besides, he is mortal. If he dies his heir may be a brute who will find a pleasure in tormenting you. If you marry, let it be a serf like yourself, but do not imagine that a free woman will knowingly embrace your fate, and become herself a slave."

"It is their forefathers' error, and our institutions," said the serf. "Let those complain who the chain fetters it galls not me. For this, then, you reject my suit?"

"That reason is alone sufficient," said the Frenchwoman. "You need not press me further. But were you free as air, I could never be yours. My heart is far away from here."

"Listen to me, Marie LaTour," said the serf, passionately. "Wed me, you must—the impious laws of self-preservation will be. Your means of existence are fast failing you. No one employs you. The deep hatred felt against the French makes no exception. Soon the popular feeling will become a wrathful torrent that no tide can stem. Already it is dangerous for a Frenchwoman to venture forth in the streets of the city. Soon she will be no longer protected against the fury of the multitude. You are already regarded with an evil eye—you will soon be a victim. Even I, Marie, I, who love you dearly, I can protect you only as your husband. Be mine, and you are safe. Reject my hand and you are lost."

"I do reject it," said the Frenchwoman. "I cannot bestow my hand without my heart. Let the worst come, I am ready to meet it."

"Infatuated girl," cried the serf. "Pshaw, ere it is too late. Recall your rash declaration. It is irrevocable."

"Farewell, then," said Ivan, rising; with disappointment and pity contending in the expression of his countenance. "Heaven is my witness that I have done my best to save you. My dream of love is over. From this time I live only for the service of my country—I live only to aid my countrymen in sweeping the invaders from our land."

The Frenchwoman smiled scornfully.

"You will struggle in vain," she said, "against the man of destiny—the child of victory. Think you the flight of those victorious eagles which have swept over more than half of Europe, will be stayed by the Nervius or the Brenus? No, they will sweep onward and onward, and stoop only to perch on the towers of the Kremlin."

The Russian heard her unmoved.

"Look from your window, Marie," said he. "Is it not a fair and pleasant sight? The suburbs are bright and warm, reflected from those gilded roofs, and towers and minarets, and the green trees in the garden. All that the invaders enter Moscow unchanged, would you not deem it the realm of endless summer? But how is it when the fierce winter comes down like polar night, and the blood of native Russians, almost freezes in their veins? I wish them no worse fate than to gain a foothold here—the winter and the Cossacks will avenge us."

Marie essayed to smile, but the words of the serf struck a death-blow to her heart. She stooped to reply, but the words died upon her lips.

"Adieu," said the serf. "If you think better of your answer on reflection, Fedora knows where to find Ivan Borisloff."

"He treats me as if I were a degraded slave like himself," thought Marie, as she watched the retreating footsteps of the Russian.

Though she had assumed a proud tone in the presence of the Russian, Marie LaTour was too familiar with the climate and the people among whom she lived, to augur a favorable result to the enterprise of the French monarch. Too well she knew the fierce fanaticism, the blind patriotism of the Russian people, serfs and nobles both, and the deadly rigors of the Russian winter. How many of the half-naked slaves that were now rolling on like a deluge would ever see their homes again! That night prophetic visions of terror haunted her dreams, and the next day, worn out with excitement, she woke feeling quite unwell. She sought to rise from her bed, but her limbs refused their office. She summoned Fedora, who made her appearance after a long delay.

"Fedora," said she, "I feel very unwell—dizzy and faint. What would you advise me to take?"

"You are weak and exhausted," said the old woman. "Your appetite has been failing for some days. The very best thing you can do is take a glass of wine."

"I think so too," said Marie. "There is a bottle of red wine on your cupboard. Fill me a wine-glass, if you please."

The old woman hastened to obey. Her back was turned to the bed, but on the opposite wall hung a mirror at an angle that reflected her whole figure and revealed her movements to the invalid. Struck by a sinister expression which passed over her countenance, Marie determined to watch her closely, and, to her horror, saw her hastily take a paper from her bosom, and pour its contents hurriedly into the wine-glass. This done, Fedora hastened to her mistress saying:

"Drink it, dear mistress, it will make you feel better."

"Thank you," said Marie; set it down by her bedside and I'll sip it by degrees. I have no further occasion for you just now."

The old woman glanced quickly at her as if to satisfy herself that no suspicious were entertained, and then bobbed out of the room. She was no sooner gone than the Frenchwoman threw away the contents of the glass.

"God help me!" said she; "what is to become of me, when even this woman whom I have befriended, seeks my life! O God, so die

here deserved, far, far away from friends and country. Poor Julie! am I never to see him more! Ah, why did I ever leave my beautiful France!"

Overcome by her emotions, she closed her eyes at length, and fell into an uneasy slumber. Awakening with a start, she beheld Fedora bending over her, her gray eyes fixed, valueless, upon her face.

"How do you feel now, dear mistress?" she asked.

"Worse—much worse," said the sufferer. "Then it is time to send for a physician," answered the old woman, with an ill-concealed expression of satisfaction. "I'll go for him at once."

She went but returned not. The weary day passed by, night fell, and the poor French girl suffered alone and abandoned. Yet her presence of mind did not forsake her. Rising from her bed with a superhuman effort, she collected some articles of food, some medicine, wine and water, and placed them by her bedside, and then tottered back again to her couch. Nights and days of delirium followed, with intervals of consciousness, and during all that time no one entered her house or sought her presence. At length, slowly, very slowly, she began to awake—began to feel a craving for food. She rose, dressed herself and procured some nourishment. In a day or two she was enabled to leave her chamber—and then she crawled down stairs and opened the street-door.

An old female beggar to whom she had often given alms was passing at the time, and paused as if from habit, gazing strangely at her attenuated figure and sunken countenance. Mechanically she put her hand in her pocket, and taking forth a few kopecks, offered them to the mendicant. But he drew back as if there were infection in her touch.

"No—no," said he, with a sort of shudder. "I will take nothing from you."

He glanced cautiously at her, and seeing no one at hand, approached nearer, and said in a low tone:

"Back into your house. It is well for you that people think you dead or abandoned. If they knew you were alive, it would go hard with you. The life of a child of France is not safe in Moscow. Have you wherewithal to support your life in those doors?"

"Yes—I have some provisions."

"Then bar your doors and live. No one can enter unless you show yourself. The priests have cursed the house, and it is as if plague-smitten. You have been kind to me, and I tell you this though you are an enemy of my people."

"But what is the matter? The streets seem deserted."

"I cannot stop to parley with you. But the French are marching on Moscow. Our army has marched out to defend it. In, in, with you!"

The mendicant disappeared, and Marie closed her doors. As she tottered back to her room, she almost wished that her sickness had proved fatal. She had but a limited stock of food in her house, and she knew that the mendicant would not return, starvation would be her fate within, while death mounted guard without. But she resolved not to anticipate evil. Providence, she thought, could hardly have saved her from the fever for a yet more cruel fate. Her appetite had returned, the blood flowed temperately in her veins—she, in spite of surrounding circumstances, was born anew within her.

She opened her eyes, and saw that she was now, with renewed strength, she began to place herself upon allowance, to husband her slender stock of provisions, and calmly to await the progress of events.

An aperture in one of the closed shutters of her front chamber enabled her unobserved to watch the occurrences of the street before her house. She saw a procession of priests, with cross and banner, followed by a dense multitude. At others, large bodies of cavalry and artillery marched by—now and then crowds of men would gather, and some even of rank would harangue there to inflame their zeal against the French.

So time rolled on, and Marie's stock of provisions became utterly exhausted. One evening she saw the desperate reality of venturing forth into the street, and going to some remote quarter where she was unknown, to replenish her stores.

At first, she advanced furtively, keeping in the shadows of the houses, and pausing every few minutes to look round her and see if she were not observed and followed. She soon perceived, however, that there was no cause for apprehension. A strange, sepulchral stillness reigned over the vast city. The shops were closed. No smoke issued from the chimneys. The walls gave back the echo of her footsteps, as in the stillness of night when the lightest sound is magnified and reverberated. This unnatural solitude in the midst of the works of man was so appalling, that she longed to mingle in the life of the city, even if danger were the price of such companionship. Her wish was soon gratified. Turning the angle of a street, she beheld a vast multitude, men, women and children, laden with their household goods, silent and sorrow stricken, and wending their way towards one of the city gates—an immense and mournful caravan.

In the opposite direction glided a few specter-like figures, thin, unswathed and ferocious of countenance, gliding down the streets like venomous reptiles, sinking into their holes to escape the light of day. Mingled with the retiring column were priests of the Greek church, wearing the robes of their order. Marie joined the column, seeing no familiar face. She ventured to ask an old man who was tottering along leaning on a stick, whether they were all going. He made no verbal reply, but pointed in their direction to the distant city. The whole scene was so visionary, that Marie could hardly persuade herself she was not dreaming.

But now a confused murmur rose behind her. She turned and beheld a group of angry men dragging along a bearded Russian of the lower class, who seemed to be supplicating for mercy.

They swept rapidly along the flank of the column, and as they came beside her, Marie shrieked away as she recognized in the most active member of the band her rejected suitor, Ivan Borisloff.

He caught her eye, sprang to her, and grasped her hand fiercely.

"One word," said he. "I give you a chance for life. I renew the offer that I made you—accept my hand, and you are saved."

"I have given you my answer," said the Frenchwoman.

"You must be my bride or my victim," said the frenzied suitor.

"Release me!" cried the girl. "I—I fear and hate you."

The features of the jeweller became convulsed with passion.

"Die, then!" he said; and raising his voice, he added: "Children of the East, look on this wretch. She too, is a spy, like yonder traitor!"

"Death to the French spy!" shouted the angry multitude; and they rushed upon her like famished wolves.

"No, no!" cried an aged priest, interfering. "It is written, ye shall do no murder. Bring her to the governor. So shall he do justice, and no crime be committed."

And Marie was hurried forward.

In the centre of a huge square, in an open space kept free by a few heavy dragons, sat on a pawing charger, Rostophin, governor of Moscow, before whom Marie was conveyed.

He had already judged the Russian, whom Marie had just seen in the hands of the infuriated mob.

"May it please your excellency," said Ivan—"here is another criminal—a Frenchwoman, who has been living among us as a spy."

The governor gazed fiercely upon Marie, but in that moment of extreme peril, her courage was equal to the crisis, and she gazed upon her judge with the calm serenity of innocence.

"How is this?" cried Rostophin. "Speak, girl, if you have aught to say. God forbid that I should condemn even an enemy unheard!"

"My lord," said the Frenchwoman, in a calm voice, "the charge is utterly false. I have just risen from a sick bed. I know nothing of what is passing within or without Moscow. I am a poor work-woman, a stranger to intrigues, and abhorring treachery from the bottom of my heart."

"You speak with an air of truth," said the governor, as he gazed on her fixedly. "Yet your French blood is almost proof positive of perjury. Still, if you were doubly criminal, your sex should save you. This wretch," he added, pointing to the cowering Russian—"is a proven traitor, and he dies the death. For you, girl, go back to your home, and when your countrymen enter the city, tell them that Moscow held but one traitor, and that you saw him die."

The Russian, thus cut off from all hope, with a howl of despair, threw himself upon his knees and clasped the stirrup of the governor, imploring him for mercy and protection. Rostophin struck his hand with the flat of his sabre, and with an expression of unspeakable loathing, kicked back his horse. It was a signal for the infuriated spectators to rush upon their victim.

He was torn to pieces in the twinkling of an eye, as a pack of famished wolves rend and annihilate their prey. Marie clasped her hands to her eyes and fled from the dreadful scene. She hastened home meeting no one on her way, and ascending to the roof of her house, bethought herself of the terrible fate which awaited those who comprised all the inhabitants of Moscow, banished forth from their beloved city and seeking the inhospitable solitude beyond. They departed, and the silence of death brooded over the late busy scene.

All that night she passed in a state of terrible anxiety, not venturing to leave her house, because she saw hideous beings, late inmates of hospitals and prisons, prowling through the streets as if in quest of victims. Many of these men tottered as they walked, and their faces gave unmistakable evidence of brutal intoxication. Nearly all of them carried torches of resinous wood, though for what purpose she could not conjecture.

Overcome, at last, by fatigue, she fell asleep about morning, and was awakened by the braying of trumpets, and the roar of kettle-drums in the street. Rushing to the window, she looked out and beheld a column of French cavalry moving past the house. In the far distance she heard the deep booming of artillery. They were French troops, but none of the elation of victory shone in their faces. They gazed about them with an air of blank wonder. Many had their heads bound up and looked laded and suffering with fatigue, and hardly able to keep their saddles.

At last a clattering of hoofs announced the approach of a group of officers. Foremost among them rode Joachim Murat, king of Naples. He was as usual splendidly attired. A hussar jacket, rich with sabres, flouted from one shoulder. His uniform blazed with orders and embroidery. His long dark locks floated on the wind. He bestrode a carolling charger, black as a starless night, and impatiently changing his gold bits. But Murat was pale, and his dark eyes rolled uneasily in their orbits. He exchanged a word or two with his staff officers, and then spurred his horse to the head of the column. After the vast body of cavalry had long passed, some regiments of light and infantry were seen by a swinging trot, the officers who rode beside the guns urging them forward by their words and gestures.

Then came a long interval of solitude and silence. At the close of day the main body made their appearance—divisions of infantry marching slowly and wearily—barges trains of heavy artillery, and at last, in the distance, their wheels. Marie dared not venture forth, for she recognized no familiar face, and she feared to present herself to the rude soldiery—Frenchman though she was. Hence she still kept herself concealed, peeping through the window-shutters and trembling at every noise. At night, bivouac fires were kindled at different

points, and the houses and steeples were lit up with their ruddy glare.

Late in the evening Marie was startled by a heavy knocking at the street door. With some trepidation and misgivings she descended the staircase and unbarred it with a trembling hand. In an instant she found herself in the arms of a French soldier, and ere she could extricate herself, a dozen warm kisses were impressed on her lips.

"Marie!" cried a well-remembered but long unheard voice—"Marie! my beautiful, my own, alive and well. Heaven has been kinder than I dared hope."

It was Julio Montrose—who had joined the army and won the grade of captain by brilliant exploits on the field of battle. He had attracted the notice even of the emperor, and the cross of the legion, bestowed by his own hands, now glittered on his breast.

He came to claim the hand of his betrothed. Heavily convinced that it was necessary their nuptials should be immediately celebrated. It was only as her husband that he could be beside her and protect her amidst the varying chances of war, since now her position compelled her to live with the French army. Young as he was, he was too far-sighted to share the sanguine expectations of many of his comrades, and he looked forward to a disastrous issue of the Russian campaign. He was far from prophesying hell the evil that happened, but he felt the necessity of giving his promised bride his name and protection. That very night a French priest united them before two witnesses, and they retired to Marie's house, consoled with the idea that henceforth, in the worst event that might happen, they should die together.

It was past midnight when the young soldier was roused by an alarm in the streets. He sprang to the window and gazed forth. From several points red gleams of light radiating upward, were reflected from the heavy folds of the lowering sky. At first he thought they proceeded from the bivouac fire, but soon, rapid flames, mounting high up in the heavens, showed him that it was a general conflagration, kindled at numerous points.

Marie sprang to his side and gazed terror-stricken on the spectacle.

"The city is on fire!" cried the soldier. "By what unfortunate chance has this occurred?"

"By no chance," replied his bride, upon whom the truth now flashed at once. "The city has been fired by the Russians. For this, then, was abandoned by the people. This was the meaning of the torches I saw in the hands of hideous wretches emerging from the prisons and the lazaret-houses."

"A terrible vengeance," cried the soldier. "That thank Heaven, we are safe here."

"Safe here?" cried the shuddering bride. "Do you not smell smoke? And look! see that gleam of fire-light under the door, Julio! The house is on fire."

"Sprang to a wardrobe and seized a casket of jewels and money."

"Take these, Julio," said she. "It is our all—and fly while yet we may."

"Safe here?" cried the shuddering bride. "Do you not smell smoke? And look! see that gleam of fire-light under the door, Julio! The house is on fire."

"Now then for flight," he whispered.

He put his arm round her waist, and flew towards the staircase. But half way down the entry, a fierce and menacing form barred their progress. His eyes were bloodshot, and his countenance inflamed; in one hand he held a torch in the other a scimitar.

"Back! back!" he cried. "And the nuptial couch your funeral pyre. Joy to you, fair bride; and think, as you write in the consuming flames, of Ivan Borisloff!"

"Give way, dog!" shouted the French soldier—clapping his bride with one hand, while with the other he disengaged his sabre from the scabbard.

"You pass only over my dead body!" cried the ruffian, throwing himself on guard.

The words were followed by the clash of steel. Two perils meted the fugitives—the sword of the assassin and the ravenous flames that had already gained the staircase and were driving before them clouds of suffocating smoke. But Julio's arm was nerveless to desperation. He stood down the wrong side of the Russian, and with a circling sweep of his heavy sabre, drove the mercenary's skull. Springing over his prostrate body, he bore his bride in safety through the flames and gained the street. All here was in wild confusion. Discipline for a time seemed set at naught. Soldiers, separated from their officers, rushed to and fro, jostling each other, not knowing in what direction to fly—the fire had sprung up in so many different parts at once.

Through the dense masses trains of artillery were driven at headlong speed, huge flakes of fire falling on passing wagons, and threatening death to all around them.

It was then that Marie's familiarity with the city did her good service. She indicated the way to her husband, and they fled with some chance of escape. She was leading the way into a broad street, when her husband suddenly caught her and drew her back without a word of explanation. A terrific explosion instantly followed, shaking the solid earth beneath their feet. The quick eye of the soldier had caught a glimpse of a train of powder-wagons, to one of which the fire had communicated itself. They hurried away in opposite directions. As they were speeding onward, they came suddenly upon a group of officers on foot, who had lost their way, and seemed overcome with fatigue.

At one glance, Captain Montrose recognized among the foremost the French emperor himself. His countenance alone of all that group, betrayed no agitation, though profound grief and melancholy were stamped on every lineament.

"Is there no excess?" he said to one of his officers. "Has my star set? Is it written that we are to die in the flames? Can no one guide us through this labyrinth of fire?"

"Sire!" exclaimed Marie, her dark eyes lighting up with animation, "the hope of France

